Important Advising Information

For Students with Disabilities

Welcome to Western Michigan University and Disability Services for Students (DSS). It is essential that your documentation be received as soon as possible. Accommodations for the fall semester cannot be provided without appropriate documentation and, a high school IEP or 504 plan may not be sufficient for accommodations at the university.

One of the most difficult transitions you will be making as you leave your high school is that of becoming your own advocate. This means you will need to speak up for yourself to make things happen. DSS can help you do just that.

When you meet with an advisor, he/she will need to know how to help you schedule classes so that you can function within the college setting. Here are a few suggestions to discuss with an advisor for this first semester:

- Discuss limiting the number of heavy reading courses if you have a learning disability or comprehension problem.
- Discuss limiting the number of heavy writing courses if you have written expression disabilities or other physical impairments that make writing difficult.
- Discuss putting off any math classes until next semester when you have a little more confidence in handling the pressures of college, especially if your disability is a mathematics issue.
- Discuss your vision issues with the advisor. Some of WMU’s classes are extremely visual in nature (art history, science labs, etc.). You may need to access a different type of class.
- Discuss the need for a Native English speaking instructor if you have hearing impairments or difficulty with auditory processing. Many of the classes at WMU are taught by English Second Language instructors or teaching assistants. Some accents may be hard to understand.
- Discuss the distances between classroom buildings for the 10 minutes you will have between classes. Students with mobility issues need to know how long it takes to get across campus. And with the current construction going on around campus, distances will be lengthened. Also be aware of which campus you will need to attend. It could take upwards of 45 minutes to get to the Parkview campus by bus.
- Try to avoid scheduling the one-day-a-week block classes. They sound nice, but are 2½ -3 hours long, sometimes without a break, and there are six days of forgetting to account for.
• Determine your optimum time to attend classes. With some medications and sleep disorders, early morning classes are out of the question. Sleeping in is NOT a good reason for staying away from early classes. Likewise, if your meds wear off late in the afternoon, try not to schedule late afternoon or evening classes.

• Limit the number of large lecture classes. Be aware that some classes may have over 200 students. Students with hearing impairments, vision impairments, LD, and ADD/ADHD can all be affected.

• Discuss with your advisor the need to schedule breaks between classes. For some students, going from class to class with no time to process the information can cause problems with retaining information. Likewise, some disabilities require regular meal times or medications to be taken with food.

While not all of these suggestions may apply to your specific disability nor be appropriate, be aware that you must help the advisor understand your needs for a workable schedule. Be as up-front as you can be; you know yourself better than the advisor, so discuss your needs and concerns. While you may not get your ideal schedule for your first term at Western, you will have one you can live with. And though it would be nice to only have classes in the afternoon on 2 days a week, that may not be the schedule most conducive to optimal learning for you.

WMU charges tuition with a flat rate for 12-15 credit hours. We would encourage you to discuss how taking more than 12 credits is affected by your disability. 12 credit hours keeps you full time for insurance and financial aid purposes, but limits the amount of work you need to accomplish while getting used to college life. You will need to make an appointment with DSS to discuss your concerns and options about your first semester’s schedule.

To plan a schedule for each new semester, you will need to meet with an academic advisor for your program of study around midterm of the current semester. As a student with disabilities, you are given priority registration through our office, allowing you to register before the majority of the student population. We’ll send you more information on this if you provide us with your e-mail address.

Have a great summer and be sure to send your documentation to DSS before the start of fall semester, if you haven’t already done so.

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